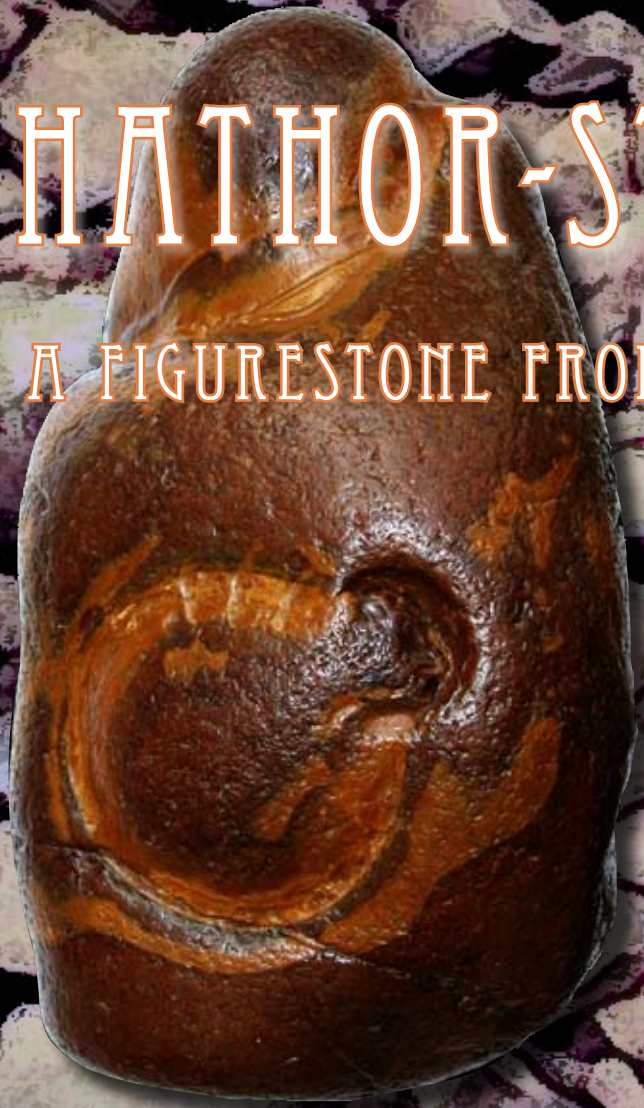
MARKUS MAY

THE HATHOR-STONE OF DENDERA

A FIGURESTONE FROM THE PRIMEVAL TIME OF EGYPT



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DENDERA (egyptian *Tantarer*, greek *Tentyris* or *Tentyra*, coptic *Tentore*) was the name of a city. Today it is the name of the temple of Hathor near the city of *Qena in Upperegypt*.

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DENDERA is situated about fifty kilometers north of Al Uqsur (Luxor) on the western bank of the river Nile, opposite the town of Qena. The history of this site goes back to a very ancient time, even if the actual temple has not been finished until the time of the Roman Emperor Nero. This is evidenced by, inter alia, a very old burial ground near the walls of the temple of Hathor, and by some very old documents speaking of an ancient shrine at the site of today's temple, going far back to the time of the first dynasty of the Pharaohs Pepi I and Kufu. Dendera was the capital of the 6th district of Upper Egypt. The goddess of the site and the temple was called HAT-HOR, that means HOUSE (HUT) of HORUS. She was the nurse of HORUS, she was his HOUSE.

A view over the Nile to the south. The temple of Hathor is located inside a bend, an angle, a *hollow of the knee* of the river Nile, therefore this place is particularly favorable for the construction of the major temple of an Egyptian mother goddess. In ancient times the angel-triangle, the bend of the arm and the hollow of the knee were associated with the woman. In ancient Greek the word „*gyne* - **γυνε**" means *woman*, the *knee*, and the *angle*.

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In the no-man's-land between the desert and the fertile arable land, the temple of the goddess Hathor. She was the protective mother of the falcon-god Horus, she was the sister of Isis and Osiris. The people revered her as the goddess of physical love, extasy and music. She was one of the highest figures in the egyptian pantheon.

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RÜCKANSICHT DES HATHOR-TEMPELS MIT DEM GEBURTSTEMPEL DER ISIS

The temple of Dendera was consecrated to the goddess Hathor and built during the 6th dynasty. It is located on the western bank of the nile and orientated to the east, facing the Nile. The existing construction of the temple began under the reign of the Ptolmaiens and was finished under the roman emperor Nero. Some scholars suppose that the current construction is built upon much older buildings, going back to the time of the 1st Dynasty of Pharaoh Pepi and Kufu. More than 200 years were needed until the final completion of the temple, which is still today in a very good conservation and famous of its unique architecture, the diversity, quality and beauty of its sculptures and hieroglyphics. The hieroglyph of the goddess Hathor is composed of the sign for HOUSE, a square with an other little square in the upper left corner, and the sign of the Hawk, the totem of the falcon-god HORUS. HAT-HOR means the HOUSE of the *Hawk*, the HOUSE OF HORUS.

The cowshaped and anthromorphous goddess with the horned solar&lunar disc on her head, the fleecy ears and the wide-opened gentle eyes of a cow has been since the earliest times associated with Horus, the god of the sky and the sun, from which her name HAT-HOR, „house (hut) of Horus“ is derived. She is the mother goddess, nurse and wife of Horus. Her solar and lunar aspect was symbolized by the horned disc on her head. The Egyptians worshipped Hathor as wife of the gods, goddess of love, birth and regeneration, as the eye of the sun and the moon, as the mistress of lust, dance and music. Her iconography is the prefiguration and the artistic model of the christian mother of god, the Madonna with the child.

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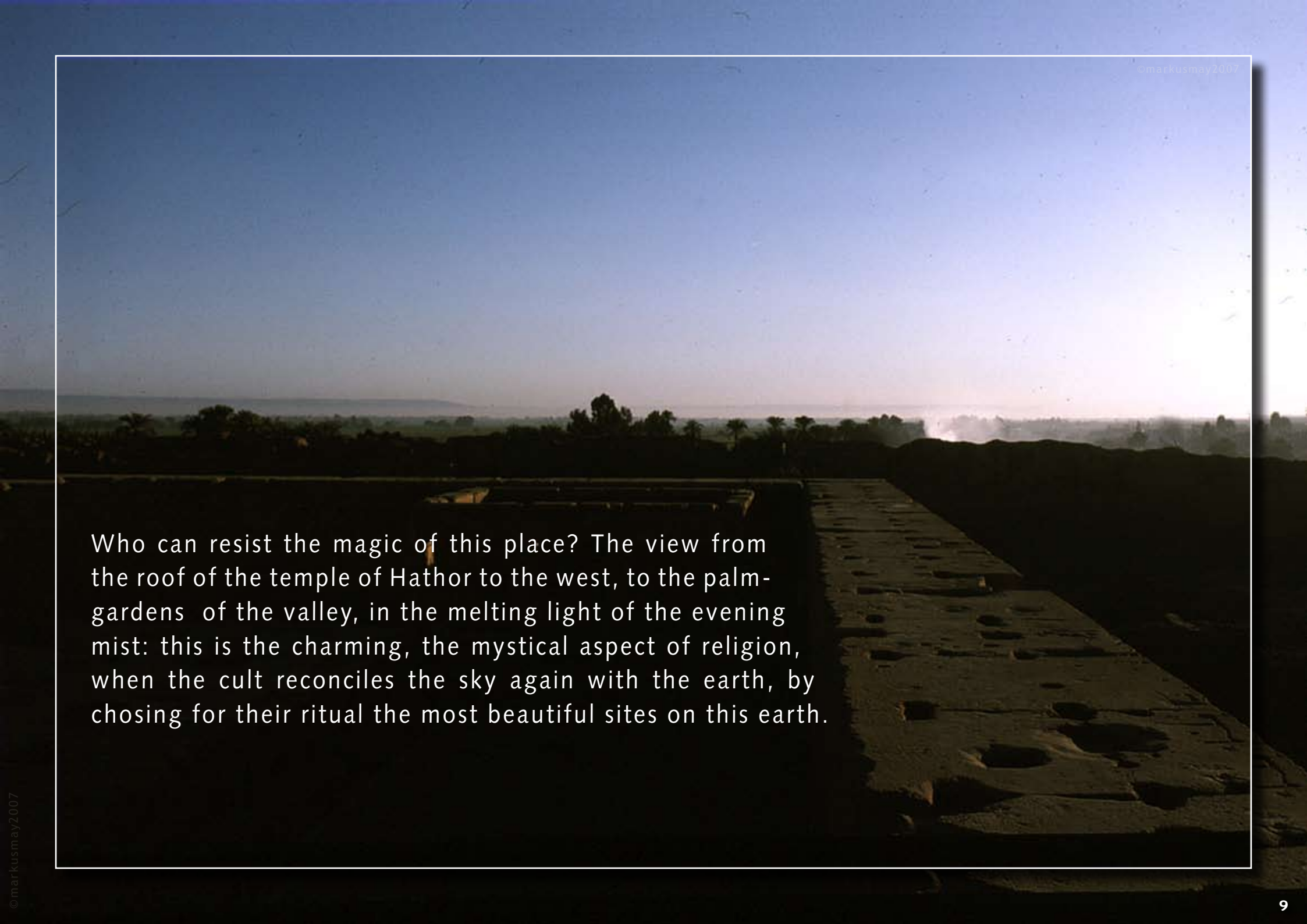

Who can resist the magic of this place? The view from the roof of the temple of Hathor to the west, to the palm-gardens of the valley, in the melting light of the evening mist: this is the charming, the mystical aspect of religion, when the cult reconciles the sky again with the earth, by chosing for their ritual the most beautiful sites on this earth.

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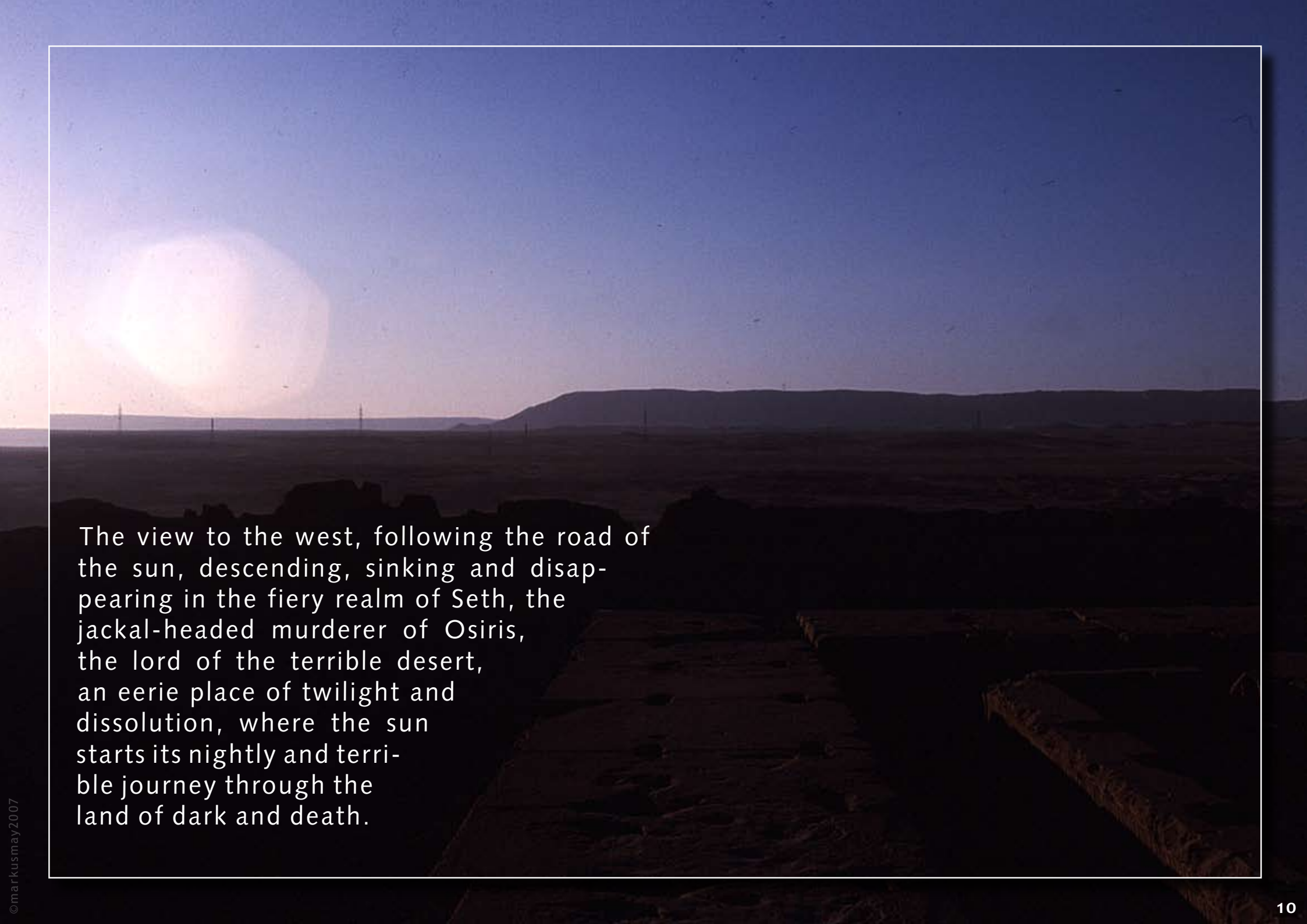

The view to the west, following the road of the sun, descending, sinking and disappearing in the fiery realm of Seth, the jackal-headed murderer of Osiris, the lord of the terrible desert, an eerie place of twilight and dissolution, where the sun starts its nightly and terrible journey through the land of dark and death.

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The Holy Lake was filled with fresh water whenever the Nile flooded the country, according to the principle of communicating tubes; a miracle for the people and a law of nature that happened and was followed every year. Must be particularly mentioned that in our days this law no longer applies, that no more miracles happen and that the Holy Sea remains dry? The floods of the Nile are hold back at the dam of Aswan and sold to the country and the people, obeying the rules of the market and the laws of money.

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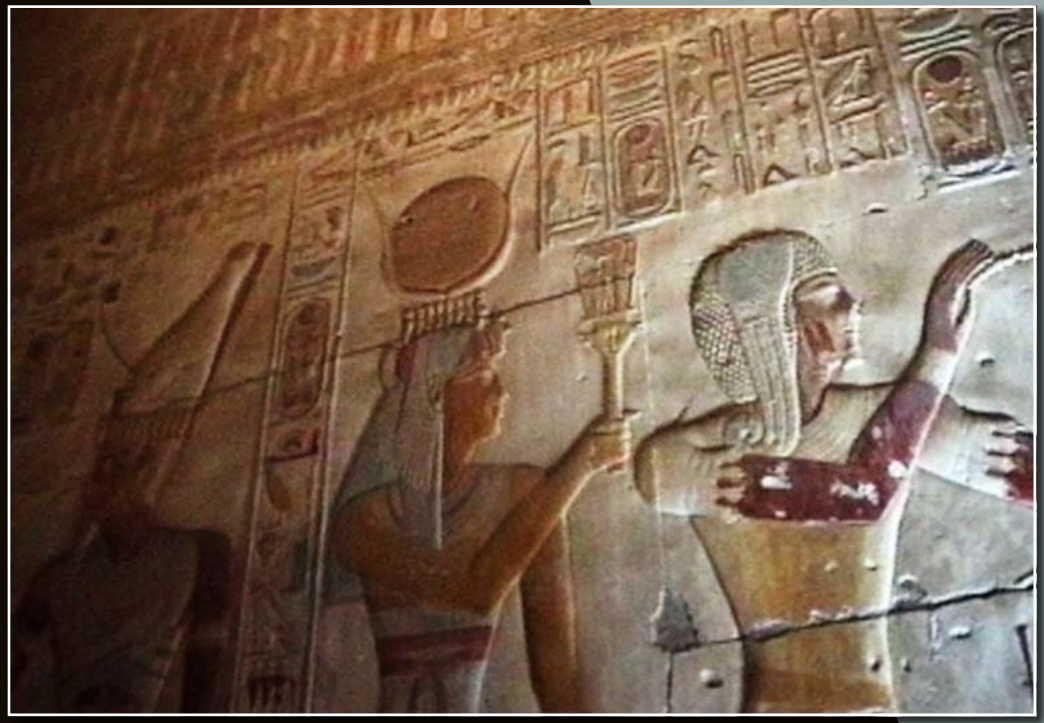

One could believe as if the works of the human art were more durable than the creations of nature. The holy source has runned dry since long time, but the colors on the walls of some halls of the temple are so shiny and fresh as they were on their first day when they were painted.

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The colors are so brillant as they were two thousand years ago, but the goddess has long time ago abandoned her temple and is not worshipped here anymore.

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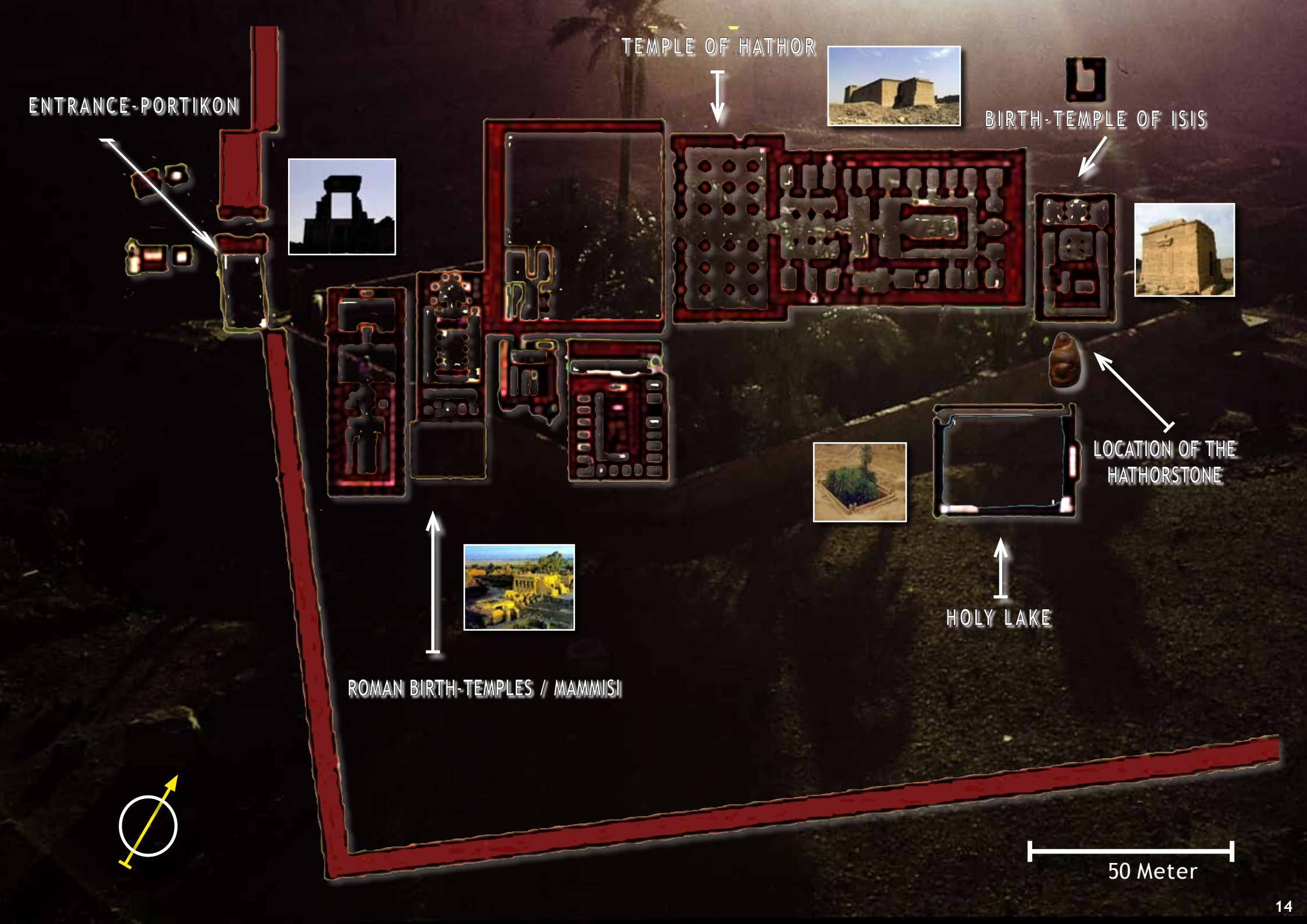

TEMPLE OF HATHOR
ENTRANCE-PORTIKON
BIRTH-TEMPLE OF ISIS
LOCATION OF THE HATHORSTONE
HOLY LAKE
ROMAN BIRTH-TEMPLES / MAMMISI
50 Meter

The site of the Temple of Dendera is littered with potsherds, fragments of limestones and with broken tubers of honey-coloured flintstones with a reddish or greyish cortex. These fragments form a layer of debris that covers two thirds of the whole temple-area and is in some places several metres thick. It is the rubble of millenia. The Hathorstone laid about 70 cm deep in a natural cavity in this loosely layered material.

AS ONE MADE A WALK AND DISCOVERED THE HATHORSTONE OF DENDERA

An almost magical encounter: there are encounters of a very special type, there are events that can only be explained by very particular affinities and sympathies, and there are circumstances and are so unique that they can only be contributed to coincidence or foreordination and higher coordination. One such incident, embedded in a whole circle of unique and fortuitious? events led to the discovery of the Hathorstone on the grounds of the Temple of Dendera, on a splendid wintermorning of the last century.

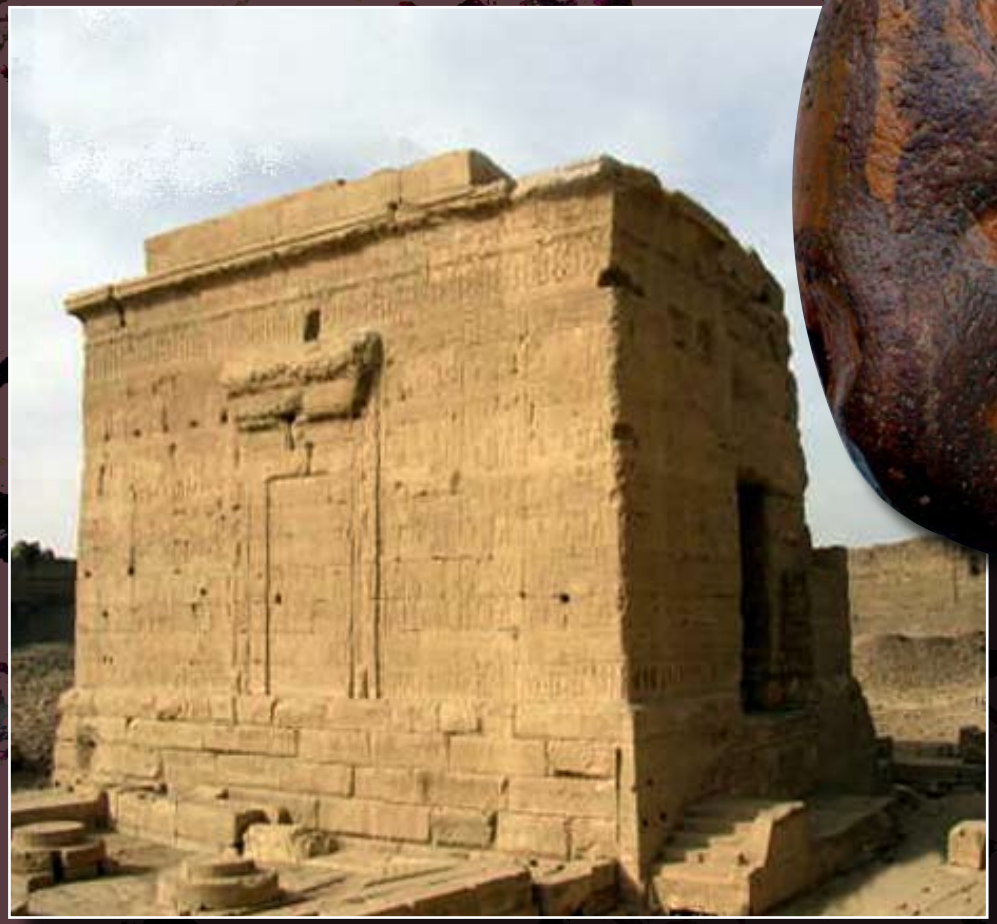
This „discovery“ of the Hathorstone was „fortuitious“ insofar, as the finder was neither an archaeologist or an egyptologist, nor had any specificl archeological knowledge of the temple of Dendera and wasn‘t either looking for something or searching. So one could really say and argue that not the finder has found the stone, but that the stone had found the finder.

In addition comes, that this stone shows up to the untrained and unaware eye of a layperson, as well as to the well- or even overtrained and (everything) knowing eye of the egyptologist just as an ordinary stone shaped by

hazard and nature and not at all as a sculpture of eminent artistic, philosophical and symbolic importance.

The whole area of the temple is densely covered with potsherds, fragments of limestone blocks and broken flintstones, which are of the same kind of flint as the flintstone of the Hathorstone and therefore could be easily confounded with it.

The whole enormous mass of this deposit material is in a condition of a more or less advanced state



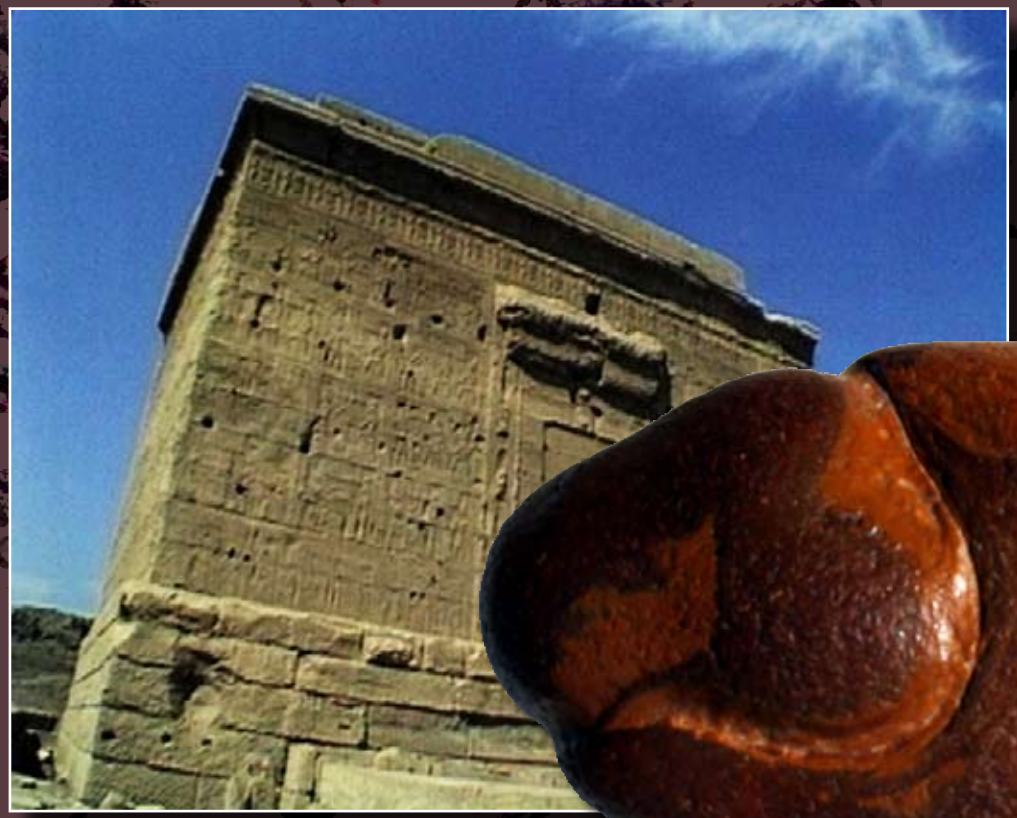
of fragmentation, weathering, corruption and dissolution and is totally mixed up, same as we know it as deposits of rubble or gravel in rivers, mountains and deserts, and it covers the whole temple area in layers several meters thick.

It is liable that in the course of the millennia this very ancient temple site has been repeatedly raked up by conquerors, temple- and grave robbers and treasure-hunters, all looking for gold, silver, precious stones or rare antiques, so that barely a single stone or any object remained in its original position.

How could this stone be compared to the marvels of the egyptian sculptures in marble and granite? So they thought all, the robbers as well as the scientists and the collectioners, and all were deluded. The stone was carelessly thrown aside, back to the rubble, dust and oblivion, - this cornerstone of Egyptology, one of the oldest, perhaps the oldest sculpture of ancient Egypt.

Dating far before the time when the pyramids were built, far before the time of the temples adorned with sculptures and paintings, it remembers an age when

One can even speculate how once upon a time one of these infamous robbers, and as the finder has reported, even one respectable archaeologist, has hold the Hathorstone in his hand, but looked at it with depreciation and finally has thrown it away as worthless: as a mere stone, nothing than an ordinary stone! Without any meaning, without art and value! It wasn't made of gold and it was no precious stone, but only one of these ordinary flintstones, how one can find them in hundreds of thousands specimen in the western hills of Quena. It was not a work of art, an antique, but just a stone, as nature forms millions of it without care or intention.



The finder, who in a certain sense is also the inventor and re-discoverer of this artstone of Hathor, - as far as he was the first person in modern times to reidentify it as an artefact created by human mind and hands-, the finder has not found this stone, but the stone has found him. It had jumped into his eyes with a twinkling flash when on one sunny egyptian wintermorning he was strolling without any special purpose and intention through a magic garden of colors, figures and symbols and was only admiring and wondering.

even the image loving priests and artists of the Nile respected the immemorial law of the prohibition of images, the *Aniconism*, which meant that they didnt dare to represent any image of the gods or of any living being in painting or sculpture and were allowed only to accentuate and reveal, what was already hidden and adumbrated in nature. So it could happen, that the Hathorstone survived the millennia, protected by oblivion, ignorance, blindness and neglect, until it jumped with a flash into the eyes of someone, who for the first time since thousands of years recognized the beauty, the meaning and the philosophy of this very unique stone.

On this walk through the temple grounds of Dendera it happened to him, that, not far from the northern side of the birth temple of Isis, a flashing and sparkling lightreflex appealed to his eyes, coming deep out of the earth, out of the rubble of stones and shards. The first time when he was passing this spot he didnt pay no special attention to this light flash or twinkling spark, but when some minutes later on his walk back he passed again on the same spot, once again a light, a sparkling from the depths of the earth irritated his eyes, this time even more radiating and sparkling, like a fire in the ground or like a

mirror or sparkling piece of broken glass stuck deep in the rubble and debris. The position of the sun, the heigth of the eye of the observer, the angle of the pit and the orientation of the enigmatic lighting „object“, that was hidden in the ground, everything, time, site, object and observer - everything was in perfect constellation and conjunction, and produced this stroke of lucky hazard or coincidence of fate in which the stone had revealed itself.

Looking for the lights origin, exploring the reason of the sparkling, this seemed to be indispensable to him and so the discoverer, who had been placed in this situation by fate or chance, succeeded easyly to localize the spot from where the flashing light was emitted, went down on his knees and detected something like a natural pit or a cleft in the loosely stratified scree from where the sparkle and the flashes seemed to originate. And because this cleft was just wide enough that he could stick his arm in, he put his arm deep in this natural pit so far as he could reach, and he did it without fear of snakes or scorpions, until he touched something cool and smooth on the bottom of this pit, and he instantly knew that this was the object that had caused the sparkling and flashing. He clasped his fingers around the „thing“ which perfectly fitted in his hand, and pulled it carefully out from the depths to the light - in doing this he felt a little bit like a sort of obstetrician who brings a new child into the light of life.

And when finally he could throw a first close-up look at this „thing“ in bright daylight, he saw that he had „only“ pulled a flintstone out of the deep, but he also

immediately realized that this stone was not an ordinary stone, but something very unique, and he remembered a remark of the greek historian and geographer Herodotus in which the greek traveller expresses his surprise that in the most holy sanctums of the egyptian temples the priests didn't worship some of the splendid and beautiful statues of their animal- or humanshaped gods and godesses but instead, as he stated it, worshipped only „hulken and misshapen stones".

Who would be surprised that in the eyes of a greek, trained to the appearance of realistically shaped and perfectly proportioned statues of humans and animals, a stone like the Hathorstone would only appear as „hulken and misshapen", just because it didnt follow the esthetic rules of realism and proportionally correct representation. These „misshapen and hulken" stones which Herodotos noticed in the sancta of the egyptian temples followed completely different aesthetics, which had already been completely forgotten by the egyptians and greeks in the time of Herodot. This forgotten art of the stones, dating from immemorial times, is more symbolic than realistic, and its purpose is more to hide its art to the profane instead of exposing it to him.

When he had pulled the stone out from its hiding place under the layers of sherds and fragments of limestones it felt smooth and looked so fresh, clean and shiny, as if it was only since yesterday that it had been cleaned, anointed and polished. One could imagine how during the millennia this stone had passed through countless hands which had given him its wonderful smoothness and brillance.

In the western hills of Quena he had seen similar flintstones in their natural site and state and so he was able to evaluate and estimate the ressemblance and the difference between the natural flintstones and the flintstone he had pulled out of the rubble, and instantly He understood that this stone had been modeled, polished, graved, cut and sculpted by human hands. The Hathorstone was indeed of the same type or „species“ of flintstones that he had studied in the hills. And it is also true, that in their natural shape, in their outline, these flintstones give easily the image of a woman. Its roundness, its general shape in the outline of an „eight“, composed of

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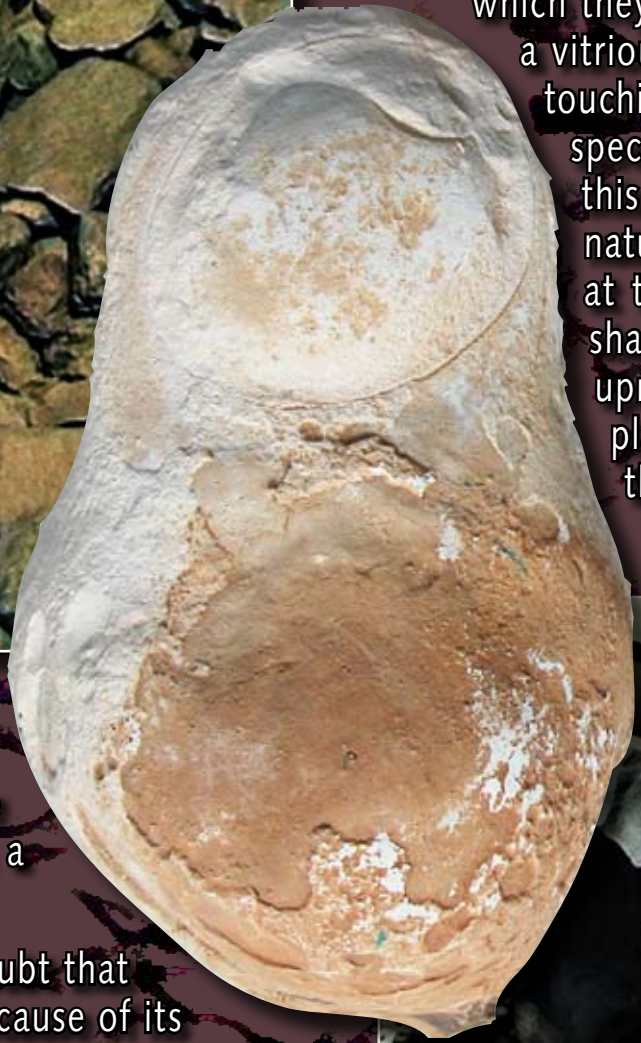


two rounds, one bigger than the other, ressembling two yolks joint together, give the natural flintstones a resemblance to a veiled woman or to a russian doll, a Mamouchka.

Therefore he didn't have the slightest doubt that this stone had been specially selected because of its natural shape and quality, but that it had also been tooled by human artists in a very ancient time: the most evident feature of this additional artistic crafting was that it had been „skinned“, that it had been deprived of its natural cortex, a kind of cementlike mixture of sand and chalk that covers the surface of the flintstones. The cortex had been artificially removed from the Hathorstone, so that the brownish honey-coloured flintmaterial appeared on which they had applied a sort of inlaid work, made of a vitrious yellow material. Here and there some re-touching work had been done to accentuate some specific aspects. But the most evident trace that this stone had been tooled is its base. All the natural flintstones are rounded or even pointed at their both ends, but this stone had it been shaped, cut, or even melted? so it can stand upright, vertical like a statue on a perfectly plane, polished and rectangular base. Some of the complex and multiple iconographic lan-guage of this figurestone came instantly to

his mind: he understood perfectly that this stone was a highly artistic representation of the goddess of this temple, the mother goddess Hathor, the nurse of the falcon-god Horus. He could identify her horned solar or lunar disc, the head of a child passing the birth-channel, the scarab of the son god, the protecting arm and hand of a mother holding her baby, a phallus, the fish, the lion, a serie of esoteric symbols and motifs that were all interweaved in the shape and surface of a single stone. What a masterpiece of art!

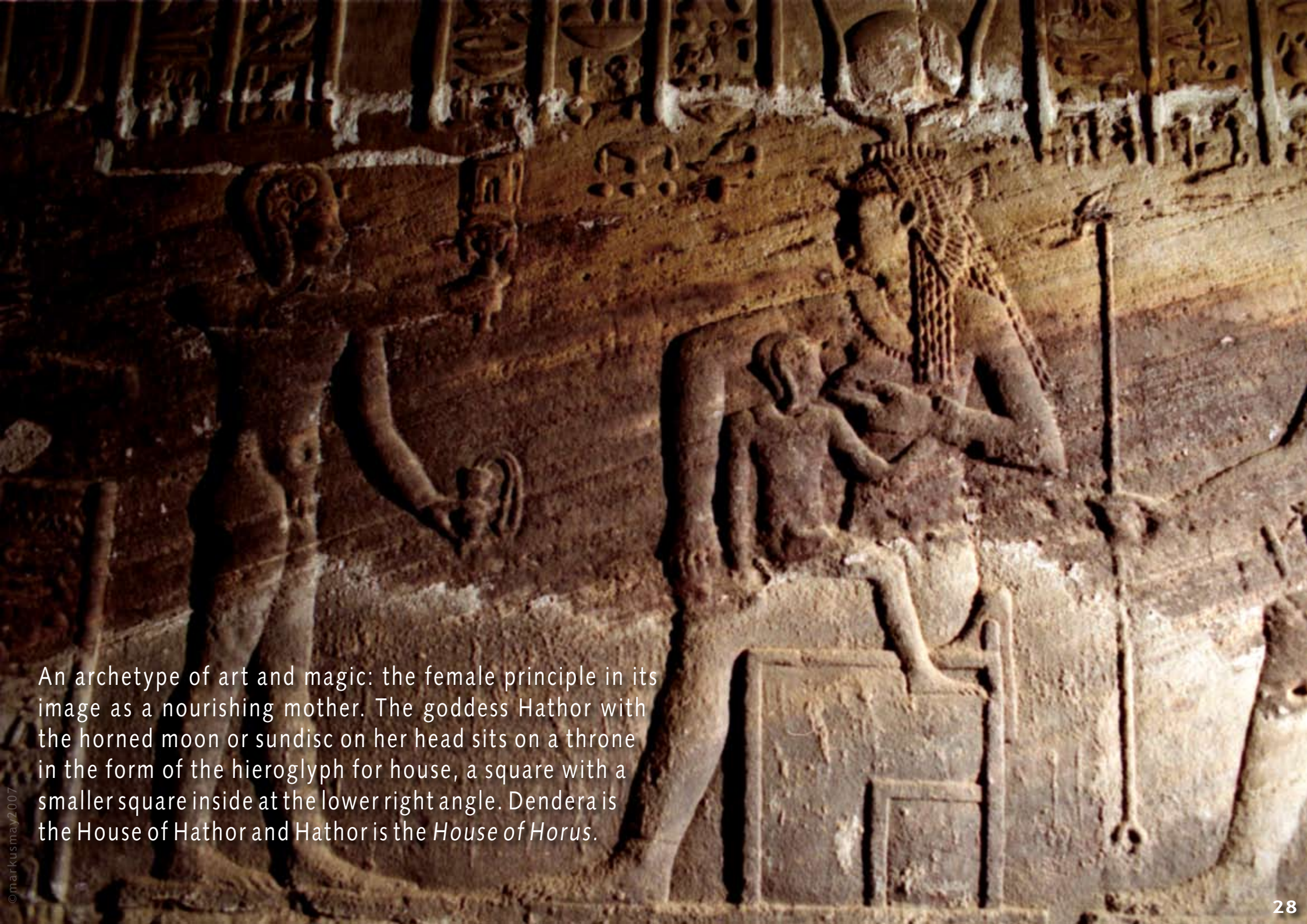
What followed then was more prosaic: he asked one of the temple guards to call a member of the Archeological Institute of Dendera to hedge and secure this find of high importance: he should inform the responsable scientist, that a visitor had found

a statue of Hathor and would wait for him at the entrance of the temple under the porticon.

The finder hadn't to wait longtime. After a few minutes an archaeologist arrived, who impatiently demanded to see the statue of the goddess. But when the finder presented him the stone, he stared at it first with an expression of incomprehension that changed to irritation and anger and with the classical words: „*Ce n'est rien, ce n'est qu'une pierre! - This is nothing, this is just a stone!*" he threw the stone in the dust and the dirt of the parkinglot .... End of the story.

The proportions of the Hathorstone are perfectly adapted to the human hand: an argument for its origin from human hands and minds! But the artist of the ancient times hadn‘t to violate the stone, like the sculptor who sculpts a statue out of a block of marble. Nearly by itself, only with a little help from the artists skill and fantasy this stone fabulates the whole egyptian pantheon. Depending from which side and angle one looks at it, it represents the phallus, the fish, the lion, the mothergoddess. But by giving it a base, on which it could stand upright like a pillar, like a statue, they had distorted and alienated the original concept of the ancient art of stones, which meant, that every object of art had to be examined and contemplated by all its sides, angles and aspects. By giving it a base, they had transformed it into an ordinary statue, into an idol which can be regarded only by one single aspect, by its frontside.

One stone, many faces, frontside, backside, left side, right side, everything must be considered under all its aspects, in its quadrature.



An archetype of art and magic: the female principle in its image as a nourishing mother. The goddess Hathor with the horned moon or sundisc on her head sits on a throne in the form of the hieroglyph for house, a square with a smaller square inside at the lower right angle. Dendera is the House of Hathor and Hathor is the *House of Horus*.

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Hathor and Horus, mother and child, husband and wife, hawk and cow, sky and earth, sun and moon. The old religions think everything in its opposites, which they then reconcile and marry to each other for reciprocally conceiving and birthing, until the circle closes again.

Who still dares to declare naively that a stone is just a stone? Even this natural flintstone of which exist thousands in the western hills of Qena cannot be explained only by a physical or chemical process. Is the repetition and variation of a composed form of this complexity not an indicator for an underlying „higher“, maybe „biological“ process? Everything is alive, even the stones live, they form species like plants and animals, which means, they are selforganizing, they are organisms. If we don‘t assume a prestidigitation of nature, we must accept that in the formation of this stone some unknown „biological“ process has been active, so that it is rather a fossil of a living creature than a mere stone. A larger „egg“ absorbs, merges with a smaller „egg“, isn‘t this biology! This makes this species of stone very different from any other ordinary stone. Its artistic and magical qualities are based on its biological qualities.

Two stones, on the left a natural flintstone, as one can find thousand of similars in the western hills of Qena on the border of the desert, and on the right the Hathorstone from the Temple of Dendera. Both stones belong to the same species of flintstones, as fossils and plants of similar appearance are classified as belonging to the same species. Both stones have a strong pysical ressemblance. A larger oblong elliptoid has absorbed a smaller eggshaped form.

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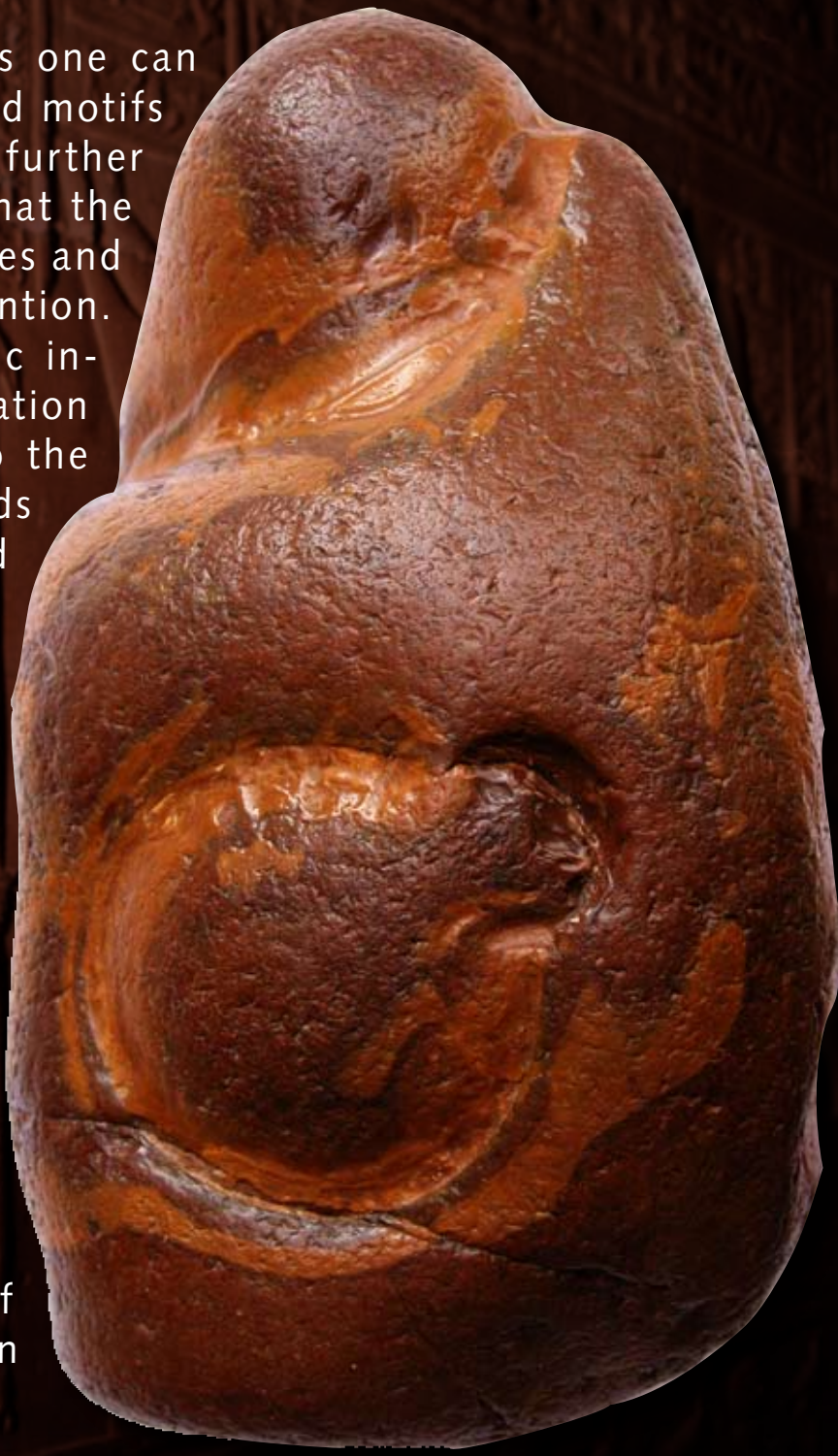
What makes a stone a figurestone? In the flintstone, as one can find it in nature, there must exist „prefigured“ themes and motifs as skletches, allusions, inspirations as possibilities for a further artistic elaboration and specification. We can suppose, that the artists of these primordial times searched after these stones and their special features and studied them with high attention. The flintstone which served as material base and artistic inspiration evoked by its natural shape, figure and coloration a very simple and strong image of the female (and also the male) principle. The junction of two yolkformed elliptoids give the image of a veiled woman and/or/with a swaddled baby. In the egyptian culture this is associated with the mothergoddess Hathor and the child Horus. Although the Hathorstone belongs to the „family, species“ of these double-yolked flintstones it shows one typical difference or „mutation“: the upper smaller yolk, which in the natural flintstones forms the head, face, veil of the woman has changed is rounded form to a glans which adds a phallic aspect to this stone. On the lower yolk the Hathorstone has another specific feature: on the circumference of the yolk, at 2 o‘clock, there is a bulge, that doesn‘t exist on the natural stones, and which adds a number of iconographic associations like a babys head passing the vagina, a womans breast with a nipple, a scarab, the horns of a cow that enclose the solar or lunar disc. This lower „yolk“ is surrounded by a nearly realistic drawing of an arm, that has been applied by the artist in an unknown inlay technology.



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How much time, how many years, how many millennia had to pass, before the images in the stone were no longer recognized, not seen, no longer understood, and the art of figurestones fell into oblivion?

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On the left, the goddess Hathor with the child Horus as a figurestone originating from an immemorial antiquity and on the right the same goddess as a painted and gilded wooden figure dating from the first century BC. Where is the art, where is the truth, where is the power, what makes them equal and what makes them different? But in the modern version the archetype of the figurestone is still recognizable.

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Despite all the diversity of sculptural design and artistic expression, one thing hasn't changed during the millennia in both artworks: that is the motherly gesture of the nursing Hathor, expressed in the angle (gyne) of the protective arm of Hathor holding the child Horus.

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The Greek historian and traveller Herodotus (5th century BC) reports that at his time when he travelled Egypt, one could see in the sanctum of the temples only *„hulken and misshapen stones“* which were revered and annointed by the priests. There one can see that already in these ancient times the art and comprehension of figurestone had fallen into oblivion. Where Herodotus saw only hulken and misshapen stones the ancients had put and admired the whole pantheon of their gods united and concentrated in one single stone.

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Frontside - backside, male side - female side, phallus -vagina, lion - fish. On the frontside the child is born and nourished, the reverse side exhibes the circumcised phallus, that begets the child, and exhibes the lion, which devours the child, and the fish, which devours the phallus (of Osiris). On the recto one finds images of birth, care and nourishing, on the verso images of begetting, devouring and destroying. On the left, the flintstone as nature created it, on the right, the stone crafted by human artists.

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The myth reports that the goddess Isis succeeded in recollecting all the fragmented and scattered parts of the corpse of her husband Osiris, which had been killed and dismembered by his brother, the jackalheaded god Seth, - she saved all parts, except the phallus of Osiris which was lost forever, because it was swallowed by a fish. Here we see the other side of the Hathorstone. The backside? The nightside? We can recognize the phallus and the fish (looking to the left), that swallows the phallus of Osiris. We also see a lion's head (looking to the right), the other, the ferocious aspect of the goddess Hathor. She was Sekhmet, the lion-godess, she had killed many humans and had got drunk of their blood, when Ra sent her down to earth to revenge his name and to punish the men.

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The other side of the Hathor stone. One might think that this is a different stone, but we just see the other side of the coin. The female, the motherly symbols are completely blanked out. Instead of the mother, an erected phallus, a wildly painted mask of a warrior or shaman, the arrogant jaw of a lion and a voracious fish that swallows the phallus of Osiris - engulfing, devouring, dismembering, piercing, such are the images that are presented to us on the nightside of the stone.

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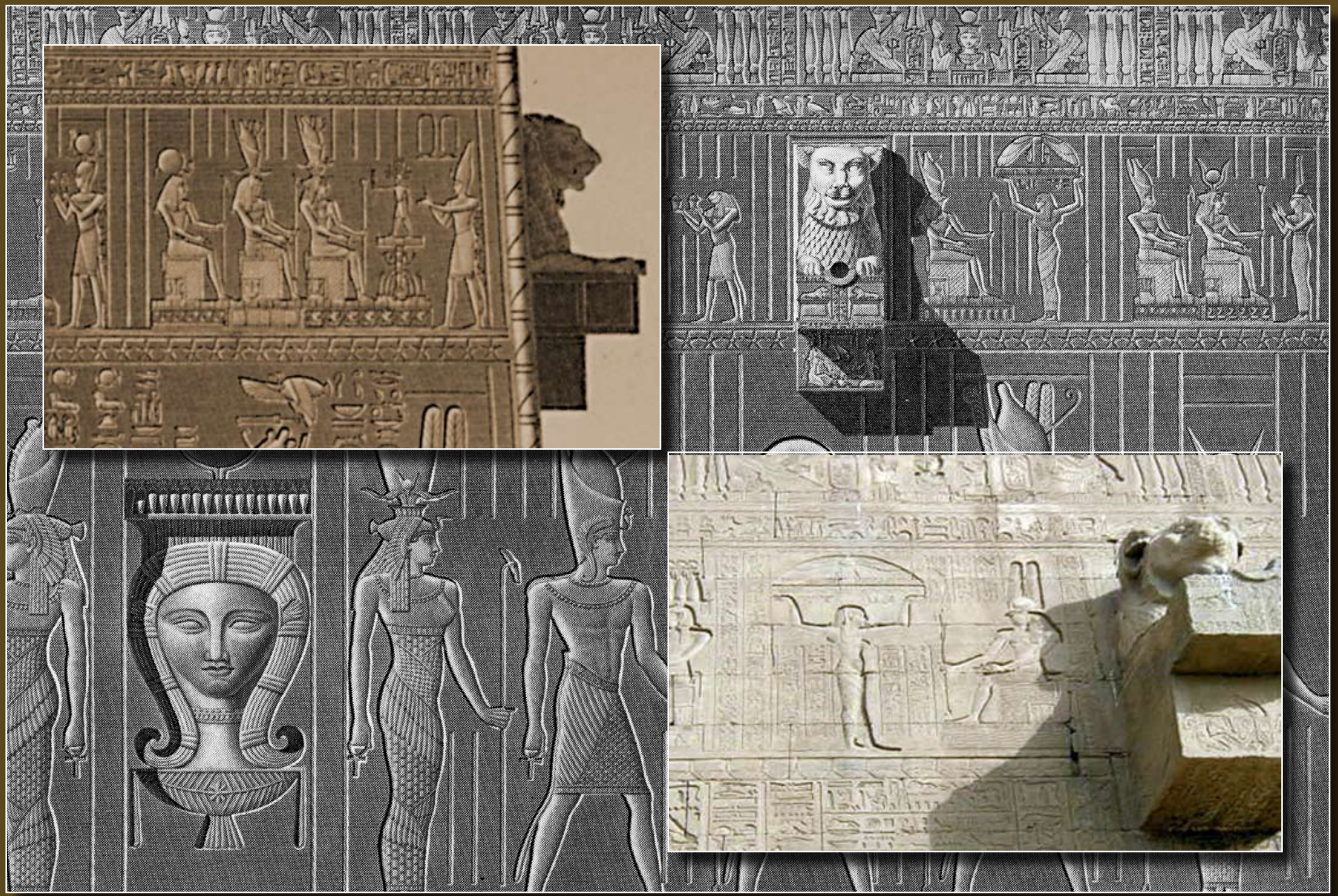

Orientated to the south, facing the desert, where the jackalheaded god of hell, Seth, and Sekhmet the lion goddess roam, the sentinels of the temple, lions.

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THE LEGEND OF RA, SEKHMET AND HATHOR

HOW THE COW-HEADED HATHOR BECAME THE LION-HEADED SEKHMET AND A PLAGUE TO ALL MEN

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Ra was the sun-god, king of all gods and creator of all things and of mankind. Since immemorial times Ra had dwelled on earth and reigned over a large empire. During many millenia his kingdom flourished and all the people on earth worshipped Ra.

But as Ra became old, the humans made fun of him. When Ra saw this, he became very angry and called a meeting of the gods.

Then Ra spoke first to his father Nu:

Nu, you are the father of all gods, I am your first born son, I need your advice, because the human beings I have created, mock and talk badly of me.

Nu answered to him:

You are a great God, you are the son, who is more perfect than the father. If you direct the fire of your eyes on the people who try to blaspheme you, then they will be wiped out from the face of the earth.

Ra did as Nu had advised, and directed its unbearable eye at the people living down on earth. They all fled from the killing eyes of Ra and hid in the shadows and in caves, in all these places, where the eye of Ra could not hurt them.

Once again the gods assembled and advised Ra, that he should send His Eye down to earth under the people so that they couldn‘t no longer hide from him. Then the goddess Hathor descended as the Eye of Ra down to the shadows and caves, where the people had hidden and she brought fear, terror and

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death to them. Many were murdered by her. After the carnage Hathor returned to Ra and the gods. She had chanded her image int a wild and ferocious lioness drunken of the blood of men. She had taken the form and the name of the lion-headed goddess Sekhmet, and she spoke to Ra and to all the other gods:

I was powerful among the men. I have killed many of them and it gave me an immense pleasure.

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And, because she had tasted from blood of the humans, Sekhmet could not get enough of it and desired to drink much more from the blood of the people of the earth.

But Ra feared, that Hathor as Sekhmet the Lioness, would extinguish the whole human race. But Ra did not want the extinction of the men. He gave order to his servants, that they should brew seven thousand jars of beer and then should dye it red with the blood of the killing. On the next morning Ra ordered his servants to pour the beer on the fields and rivers of the earth, there where Sekhmet-Hathor wanted to slaughter the humans. The servants of Ra immersed the fields with the red dyed beer.

When Hathor-Sekhmet descended on the earth, she saw the blood-drowned fields and her eyes got caught by her own seducing image in the mirror of blood and beer, and she loved herself so much in her beauty as lion-headed goddess Sekhmet, that she got drunk by herself, the blood and the beer and she drank so much of beer tinted with until she wasn't thirsty anymore.

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The myth recalls, how much the cow-horned and cow-eared Hathor enjoyed it, when she was allowed to murder the humans and to drink their blood. Oh, what a pleasure, when the mother devoured her children! Even Ra was terrified, when Hathor-Sekhmet showed up in heaven with a lions head on her shoulders and roared like a lioness.

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The other side, or the antipole of the sweet, the soft, the feeding and breeding, is the devouring and dismembering, the cutting and the swallowing, when Hathor, the sweet and feeding mother, becomes Sekhmet, the killing and devouring lioness.

When is a stone a figurestone? When nature has imprinted and engraved it with signatures, which can be recognized, deciphered and activated as images and symbols resembling and inspirating the human mind.

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The Sekhmet-, the lionside of the Hathorstone can be interpreted as a lion, as a (circumcised) phallus, as well as a fish, that swallows a phallus with the glans looking out of the fishes mouth. Two different species of fish can be identified on the Hathorstone, depending on how the stone is hold to the viewer: the head of a moray eel (top left) or of a carp (bottom right).

The myth tells that Seth had cut the corpse of his brother Osiris in pieces and scattered the parts everywhere. Isis, the sister of Osiris, managed to recover all the scattered parts of the corpse, all except for the phallus, which had been swallowed by a fish. According to Plutarch, there are three species, suspects of having devoured the phallus of Osiris: first, the carp of the Nile, the Lepidotus, then the Oxyrynchos (Mormyrus) and finally the Phragus.
And although this act, the devouring of a sacred part of the body of Osiris was an evil deed, the Oxyrynchos was worshipped in a town of the oasis of Fajum, bearing the same name, as a sacred animal, because this fish had eclused out of the wounds of Osiris. The Oxyrinchos also was worshipped in the temple of Esna where it was represented with the horned disk of the goddess Hathor.

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One can see clearly the abraded, melted? base or cut area of the Hathorstone. The flintstone is after the diamond the hardest stone in nature. Its base has been completely flatted without any trace of grinding. It looks as if the Hathorstone had been made so soft as clay or wax, and its standing area had been cut off by a knife or had been softed and melted like wax on a flat hot plate.

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I
see
that what
you don't see.
If one would look
through a magnify-
ing glass or a micro-
scope, would he see im-
ages and figures, or would
he just imagine them? Who
takes a closer look, will he
see more? Maybe the whole
surface of the stone is a giant
microrelief? Maybe you just need
the right magnification factor and
the right light angle to discover a
whole new world.

A higher magnification reveals a new micro-structure in the surface of the stone, as if it had been engraved or chiseled with microscopic tools. One sees miniscule shell-shaped retouchings and the entire surface seems to be covered with microscopic bas-reliefs representing organic forms of plants, animals and humans. Everything is there, if one want to see: eyes, faces, heads, arms, legs, hulls and skulls, and thousands more of intricate & interlocking bodies of humans and animals, and maybe demons too, all entwined as in a hellish fall of Michelangelo or in a celestic ascension of Grünewald.

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The more one increases the magnitude, the more details appear into light and vision. How many pairs of eyes, how many faces look at you? How many bodies and parts of animals and people are engraved and sculpted in this stone?

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The central motif on the stones frontside, its female, its maternal side, is the "Horus-child" in the arm of Hathor. You can see clearly the drawing of the angled arm of Hathor finishing in her hand, applied in a honey-coloured glasslike inlay. Circling the scarab-shaped body of the child are retouchings filled with this honey-coloured vitrious substance to accentuate the design of the child, that is also the horned lunar&solar disc of the Goddess Hathor. This scarabshaped childformed yolk with a bulge could also be the representation of an eye, not the eye of the falcon, but maybe the eye of a cow, the eye of the godddess Hathor, the Eye of Ra

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Particularly striking is a diagonal interstice, a kind of sharp cleft, deeply cut in the surface of the stone. This cut or cleft seems to be the only visible trace of a damage, a „violation“ of the stones substance and it raises an other interesting problem: in the area where the cut intersects the arm, the contimuity of the drawingline is not only interrupted, but has shifted downwards, so that the upper contourline of the arm follows the inferior outline. It looks, as if this stone had been broken and then „glued“ together. But how can someone bond/ glue a broken flintstone? Or was the stone once soft as clay and wax? Wanted the artist us to see and wonder, what he could do with the stone: that in his magic hands the flintsoft became so soft as wax?

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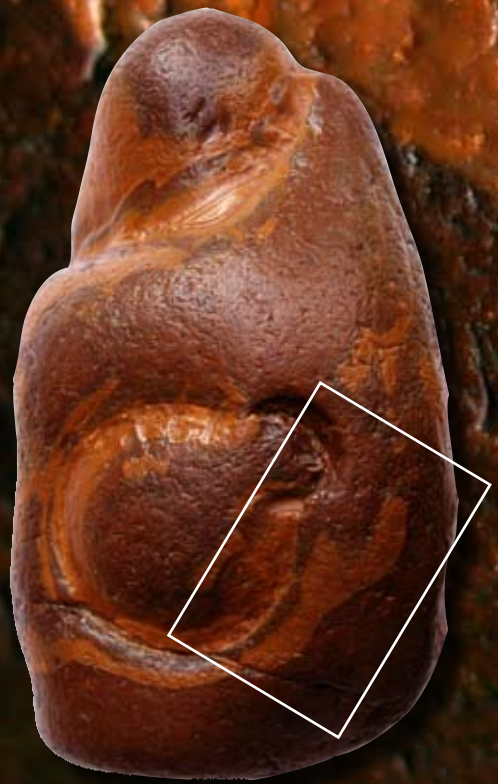

In higher magnification it seems as if the Hathorstone would reveal more and more finer details on and in its surface. Are we dealing here with an unknown art of micro-sculpture and micro-engraving?

On even greater magnification appear more traces of tooling, painting and modelling: etchings engravings punctuations cupulations arasions etc. which generate forms and signs that are all interlaced, multiple, visble and hidden. One could call it an intentional art, a multi- or non-directional art; before the artist did his first stroke he studied the stone to find out what was implanted in the stones, which images and ideas were hidden and waited to be revealed.If things are not real, then they are possible.

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Is this really an ancient art of painting and scultpturing, of modelling the stone, or is it just a game of nature, complemented and fulfilled by our imagination? We like to imagine, think and fabulate out of nothing, or a little bit, whole new worlds and how happy we are, when our dreams come true.

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An eye, an hawk-eye, the Eye of Horus, a wave, a wing, the lid of an eye, the eye brows arch, a mouth, a boat, a sign? Colors and shapes painted and inlaid with a glassy honey-coloured material.

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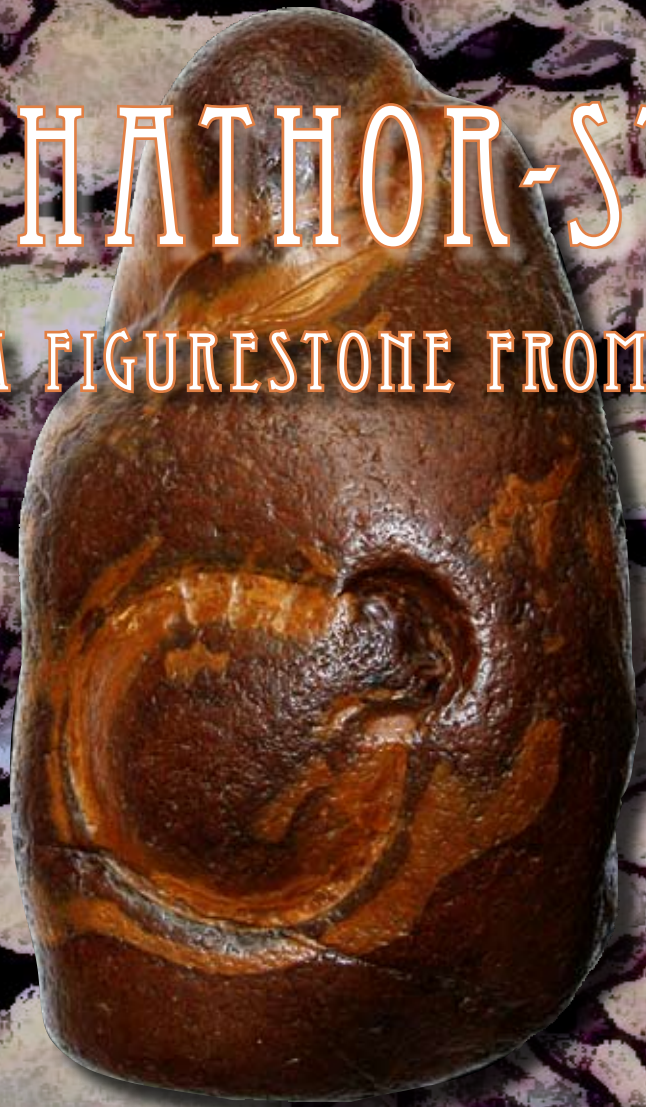
MARKUS MAY

THE HATHOR-STONE OF DENDERA

A FIGURESTONE FROM THE PRIMORDIAL TIME OF EGYPT



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